

REMARKS

Claims 1-31 have been rejected by the Office under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Claims 2, 3, 8, and 13 have been canceled. Claims 1, 4-7, 9-12, and 14-31 are pending in the application.

Applicants are filing herewith corrected drawings to overcome various informalities. A marked-up copy and a clean copy have been provided for the convenience of the Examiner.

Claim Rejections

Claim 1 has been rejected by the Office under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being unpatentable by Nulman. Claim 1 has been amended to include elements from claims 2 and 3. Amended claim 1 recites entering semiconductor process parameters into a statistical process control subsystem; receiving a request from an equipment interface for a data collection plan; configuring an equipment interface, using the statistical process control subsystem, to collect the semiconductor process parameters, wherein configuring includes providing the data collection plan to the equipment interface.

The Office states that the system of Nulman discloses, at column 8, lines 5-8 and at column 9, lines 29-31, the limitations of amended claim 1. It is respectfully disagreed that the claimed limitations are disclosed by Nulman.

Nulman does not disclose receiving a request from an equipment interface for a data collection plan and providing the data collection plan to the equipment interface as recited. The Office relies upon column 8, lines 5-9 of Nulman to reject original claim 3, now amended claim 1. The text relied upon by the Office at column 8, lines 5-9 refers to parameters 340 and chamber metrology controller 318 on FIG. 5 of Nulman. Since neither element in the recited section of Nulman, controller 318 nor parameters 338, are capable of bidirectional communication with any piece of equipment, i.e. receiving a request from and providing data to an equipment interface as recited, it is not possible for either of the elements 318 or 340 to disclose the recited elements of amended claim 1. For this reason, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 1 is respectfully requested, and it allowance solicited.

Claims 7 and 12 have been rejected by the Office under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being unpatentable by Nulman. Claims 7 and 12 have been amended to include elements from claim 8 and 13, respectively. Claims 7 and 12 have similar limitations as those recited in claim 1. The Office has rejected claims 7 and 12 using the same reference cites and reasoning as claim 1. Claims 7 and 12 are allowable for the reasoning argued with respect to the rejection of claim 1 above. Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 7 and 12 are respectfully requested.

Claim 17 has been rejected by the Office under § 102 as being unpatentable over Li. However, Li does not disclose a user interface to receive the data indicated (e.g., a capability specification, a data collection plan, and a process control strategy). The Office states that the various elements of Li are programmed to perform these functions. Even if the various modules were programmed to perform these functions, having a system with programmed modules is different than having a user interface to receive the recited data. Therefore, Nulman does not disclose a user interface to provide the recited elements. Instead, the claimed information, if it exists at all in Nulman, is part of the system and not received at a user interface of the system as recited. For this reason, the rejection of claim 17 should be withdrawn.

Claim 24 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being unpatentable over Li. Claim 24 recites, in part, receiving a capability specification identifying a data collection capability of a semiconductor tool; and receiving a data collection plan at the statistical process control system to be used in conjunction with the capability specification to identify data to be collected from a semiconductor tool.

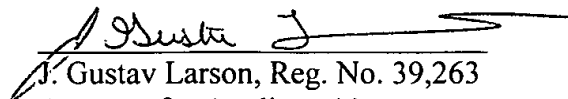
Nulman does not disclose receiving at a statistical process control system a capability specification that is used in conjunction with a data collection plan also received at the statistical process control system to identify data to be collected. No such identification occurs with Nulman. Instead, as stated by the Office, the data to be collected is programmed into a module of Nulman, thereby making identifying data to be collected, as recited in claim 24, not possible with Nulman.

Because each of the independent claims is in condition for allowance, so are each of their dependent claims. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejections of all claims is requested and their allowance solicited.

In conclusion, Applicant(s) has overcome all of the Office's rejections, and early notice of allowance to this effect is earnestly solicited. If, for any reason, the Office is unable to allow the Application on the next Office Action, and believes a telephone interview would be helpful, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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